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Speaking in favor of SB-971

Shortly after WW2, recognizing a need to train the next generation of scientists and engineers, Vannevar Bush, the science advisor to President Truman, created what would become the National Science Foundation. In doing so, he set up the way scientific research is done to this day and well into the foreseeable future.

Government grants were given to institutions of higher learning like The University of Michigan, and the research was carried out by faculty and graduate students at the universities. The goal was, and still is, to train future generations of scientists and engineers by providing them the resources to do science in the public interest.

The combined scholarly and educational goals of the American university system of research cannot be separated, nor should they. In simple terms, this system works. The American University system, with Michigan near the top, is the finest in the world, and no one else comes close. Students from around the world come here because our universities produce the finest scientists, engineers, researchers, and scholars in the world.

The role of the graduate student research assistant as a researcher is indistinguishable from his or her role as a student. The student's progress is evaluated based on his or her growth as a researcher, not on their profitability. The student is guided by a faculty mentor, with whom he or she shares a close relationship, and by his or her academic department. The motive of each party is to turn students into scholars through research in the public interest.

To call graduate student research assistants "employees" reflects a **fundamental misunderstanding** of the role of the graduate student in the American university. We are students because of what we do, not because of external factors like taxes we pay on our stipends or what laws apply to us. It is no shock that the faculty of the University of Michigan overwhelmingly oppose the classification of GSRA's as employees. It's simply wrong.

The University of Michigan is one of the finest universities in the world, and stands as a shining example of the success of the American system of scientific training, research, and scholarship. In asking you to pass this bill, I am asking you to protect our University from outside interference. I am asking you to let us do what we do. Let us do research for the public good. Through that research, let us train the next generation of scientists and scholars.

I come to you today as a student, as a scientist, and as an academic, but not as an employee. I ask you to not let an outside organization define me. Upon graduation, I will (hopefully) become an employee. Until then, allow me these few years to remain a student.